

THE
CHRISTIAN PULPIT,

THE RIGHTFUL GUARDIAN OF MORALS,

IN

POLITICAL NO LESS THAN IN PRIVATE LIFE.

A DISCOURSE DELIVERED AT GETTYSBURG, OCT. 26, THE DAY APPOINTED BY
THE GOVERNOR, FOR PUBLIC HUMILIATION, THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER,

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DISCOURSE.

ACTS XXIV, 25. *“And as he (Paul) reasoned of righteousness, (or justice, δικαιοσύνη,) temperance, (or continence, ἐγκράτεια,) and judgment to come, Felix trembled.”*

IT IS a circumstance of just congratulation to men, and a spectacle not void of interest to angels, when a nation feels its dependence on God, and is not ashamed publicly to recognize his Providence. It shows, that in their pursuit of things temporal, they have not wholly forgotten things spiritual; that in their eager grasp after the advantages of this earthly kingdom, they have not entirely forgotten that their destined citizenship is in heaven, that they are the subjects of that exalted Being, whose empire embraces two worlds, and who reigns alike among “the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of earth.” It therefore reflects credit on the character of the Executive of our State, and is a subject of mutual congratulation to all good citizens, that he has appointed a day for such public recognition of God, and invites his fellow citizens to unite in thanksgivings for the divine goodness, in prayer for continued blessings, in humiliation on account of our national sins, and in supplication for the aversion of the merited judgments of Heaven. Nor is such appointment a mere matter of course. For, although the New England States have been accustomed annually thus to acknowledge God, since the foundation of their civil fabric was laid on board of the Mayflower, before they landed on Plymouth rock; it is but of late, comparatively, that Pennsylvania has adopted this laudable custom, and we regret to add, that even since the practice was introduced it has not been uniform.

Such days must be regarded as precious opportunities for spreading a healthful influence over any country. If it is desirable for individuals occasionally to retire from the bustle and confusion of the world, in order to review the grounds of their individual responsibility, and recall the record of their agency, which has been entered on the book of remembrance in heaven; it certainly cannot be less desirable for nations in their aggregate capacity, for here their business is transacted by men in their delegated character, and as the effects of unjust and even immoral legislation, of unjust judicial decisions, or of abuse of executive power, fall less upon those who are guilty of them, than on other parties immediately concerned, and on the community at large; it is obvious that the selfish principles of our nature are more apt to warp our conduct, and the eternal unchangeable principle of right and wrong to be violated. That community alone can hope to preserve the purity of her institutions, which by various means, keeps alive an active and pervading sense of national responsibility; and among the instrumentalities of this moral vitality, none are more obviously appropriate than the appointment of stated days for this purpose, when the populace are invited to assemble in the house of God, and the ministers of our holy religion are expected to conduct their devotions. If the pulpit generally speaks out at such times, and declares the whole council of God appropriate to the occasion, important reformations may be achieved in the moral administration of our governmental machinery.

But here we are met in the threshold, by the objection, not seldom heard, that the political affairs of the country do not fall within the legitimate province of pulpit discussion. This, as I have recently had opportunity to learn, is both the theory and practice of the despotisms of Europe, where preachers never mention their rulers but in terms of adulation, or in prayers for blessings on their heads; but it illy comports with the genius of our free institutions, in which all power is ultimately vested in the people, who ought

therefore to be well instructed in their duties and ought carefully to watch the conduct of their rulers. Yet I freely admit, that important as a judicious application of the influence of the pulpit is to the welfare of our country, there is a species of political preaching, by which the sanctity of the sacred desk is violated, and the interests neither of church nor state advanced. It is therefore no less important, that the minister of Christ should have correct ideas of the proper lines of demarkation on this subject; than that he should faithfully discharge his duty when known, as did the intrepid Apostle of the Gentiles in the case before us.

Our time will not allow us to dwell on the circumstances of our text, in which we see a christian preacher, fearlessly rebuking a Roman Governor, discoursing among other things, of justice to him, whom Josephus represents as notoriously unjust, cruel and oppressive in his government. Our design is to take occasion from this passage to discuss the general theme of which it is an exemplification :

The Christian pulpit, the rightful guardian of morals in political no less than in private life.

It is our purpose I. *To prove the obligation of the Christian pulpit to occupy this ground, and*

II. *To exhibit the prominent instructions which it is her duty to inculcate.*

I. The claim of the Christian pulpit, as the exponent of Christianity itself, to tender some instructions to man in regard to his political interests and duties, is already implied in the fact, that Christianity has established her right to sit enthroned above all science, and especially all departments of human, responsible agency. There was a time when infidels expected to entrap the Bible on the ground of its relations to physical science, and detect its author in blunders; but the progress of investigation has dissipated all these delusions, and Christianity stands out before the world, fully vindicated as the handmaid of universal knowledge, and as con-

sistent with all truth. Her inspired records were not designed as a text-book of universal science, physical and moral, as was formerly maintained by some visionary minds in Great Britain, such as Parkhurst, Hutchinson and others, but as a revelation of moral or religious truth. And as moral relations run through all the agency of man, physical and intellectual as well as moral, and political as well as physical; it is obvious that Christianity, which first placed these relations in their proper light before his eyes, has some lessons of instruction concerning all his conduct, and therefore also his political action.

God is moreover, the fountain of our political rights, as well as of all others; and therefore he may justly claim to direct their use, and be acknowledged in their enjoyment. Who is it, that gave us the soil we inhabit, the quiet possession of which we regard as one of the fundamental privileges, secured by our civil institutions? Who created the very air we breathe, the birthright of all earth's inhabitants, and who causes the land to bear its annual fruits? Yea, is not even government itself—are not “the powers that be,” who define and defend our possession of these privileges, “appointed of God?” And shall God himself have no right to instruct us in the proper use of his own grants? Shall we, the usufructuaries, claim absolute possession of the property, of which we are mere tenants at his will; and vainly attempt to cast off the conditions and obligations inevitably connected with its possession?

Again, if man be responsible to God at all for any of his actions, even for his religious conduct, such responsibility must also extend to his political agency; for it is undeniable, that the political institutions of a country exert a vital influence on its religious condition, and on the progress of the Redeemer's kingdom on earth. Those governments for example, which usurp the appointment of the ministers of Christ; which forbid public worship in any other form than that of the established church; or which prohibit all meetings for religious worship, except the stated services

of the Lord's day prescribed by law, as is the case in different countries of Europe, through which I have recently passed, most certainly infringe the inviolable rights of man, and impede the progress of religion. And shall the author of religion himself, not be supposed competent to instruct civil rulers on their duties? Or, shall the ministers of his church not be allowed to lift up their voices against such flagrant abuses of their Master's commands?

But God himself has decided this point, He *has* given numerous instructions on this subject. The Bible is replete with directions for the official conduct of kings, lawgivers, judges, and civil rulers of every class. In the infancy of man, before the fall, he gave him a code, including civil as well as religious precepts. In the Old Testament dispensation, under the theocracy, he condescended himself to be the civil as well as religious ruler of his people, and made ample revelations of his will. Of the many directions to civil officers which he revealed, some are positive institutions, of special reference to the condition and localities of the Jewish people, and not binding on other nations; but a vast number of those instructions convey the moral principles which should govern the conduct of civil rulers in all ages; and these are as applicable to us as a nation, as they were to the Jews, as obligatory on our rulers, as on theirs. The books of the New Covenant, moreover, contain numerous precepts concerning the nature of civil governments, and the duties devolving both on the ruler and people. These, of course, are binding on us in all their amplitude; and as ministers of Christ are required to "declare the whole counsel of God," they of course can have no authority, either to erase them from the statute book, or to exclude them from the pulpit.

It seems therefore very evident, that the Christian pulpit is the rightful guardian of morality in politics, so far as the Bible, which is its statute book, itself utters prescriptions on this subject. But let us inquire, secondly,

II. What are the nature and extent of the instructions of the inspired volume on this subject.

These instructions may in general be characterized as belonging to the *morals of politics*, and consist in the application of the principles of the *moral law* to the discharge of political duties, both by rulers and subjects or citizens.

To correct prevailing errors on this subject, we shall first specify some supposed political virtues which the Christian pulpit cannot teach :

1. The scriptures contain no instructions on *mere party politics*, and that minister who employs the sacred desk to give utterance to his views, however sincere they may be, on such topics, undoubtedly descends from the high vantage-ground which it is his privilege to occupy ; and loses his claim to that deference with which the appropriate instructions of the pulpit ought ever to be received. *Topics of party politics generally, are those which do not DIRECTLY involve a moral principle, but which relate either to disputed theories for the interpretation of our national Constitution, or to measures and statutes supposed to involve the same principles ; as also all other disputed questions relative to the legal competency of an officer to perform a given act, and the influence of particular measures on the temporal prosperity or civil liberties of the people ; on which subjects the parties have taken sides.* Thus the original ground, on which the democratic party, lead on by Jefferson, was formed in our country, in opposition to the federal, of which Washington was regarded as the head, was a party question, namely, whether a free or strict construction should be observed in the interpretation of our national constitution concerning the powers of the federal government. The question of internal improvements by the national government is of the same kind, and also that of the tariff, which involves the same principles ; for whilst the one party vindicates to the general government the power to tax the imports of the country for the pur-

pose of encouraging domestic manufactures, the other denies that power, and pronounces its exercise unconstitutional. It is evident that these and kindred topics are not touched on in the Bible, and therefore, however important they be to every citizen, their discussion belongs to the popular assembly and legislative hall, but certainly not to the Christian pulpit. At the same time, it cannot be denied, that although the original division of parties in our country was based on principle, and men of equal talent, sincerity and patriotism were found in both ; much of the excitement and party wrangling in our day, is in reality a mere conflict for the emoluments of office, and therefore of a selfish nature, in connection with which the injured name of patriotism should not even be mentioned. Is there not reason to fear, that many otherwise worthy citizens are actuated by such motives, when they adhere to their party after it has turned recreant to its professed principles, and when they defend the candidates of their party at the expense of known truth, and to the detriment of their country's welfare? In regard to such partisan warfare, the pulpit can have but one duty, namely, to denounce the whole as grossly immoral, and subversive of the best interests of our country ; and to call upon our citizens generally to humble themselves before God on account of their sins. Enlightened, honest, temperate party spirit, which consists in attachment to the principles and measures avowed by a party, is not to be condemned. But that selfish, degraded party spirit, so prevalent in our day, which is an attachment to a party name and party organization and party leaders, less from regard to any set of measures or principles, than to ensure the success of such party, and an interest direct or indirect in the distribution of the loaves and fishes, and which leads men to adhere to their party after it has abandoned its professed principles, is not only morally corrupt, but dangerous to the liberties of the country.

2. Nor can the christian pulpit inculcate *that unprincipled species of patriotism*, or love of country, embodied in part in the

motto, "Our country right or wrong," professed by many, which justifies fraud, injustice, robbery and oppression towards other nations, for the benefit of our own; that patriotism which prompted the aggrandizement of Greece and Rome at the expense of all surrounding nations, and which even amid the gospel light of our own age is often pleaded in defence of some of the most unhal-
lowed feelings of our nature. Christianity teaches us to love all men, as well as our fellow citizens; not even to exclude our enemies from the circle of our affections. It was the patriotism of the Pharisees and not of Christ which inculcated the maxim, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy*. But, said the divine Redeemer, who brought his patriotism from the bosom of his Father in heaven, who is the universal Parent of all nations, I say unto you, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you."* And we look in vain, in the records of inspiration, for any precept, which, under the specious name of patriotism, or under any other designation, sanctions any treatment of our enemies inconsistent with the rule of reciprocity: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."† Have we not all erred on this subject, in times past, my brethren? Have we not applauded actions performed under the supposed sanction of a mistaken patriotism, which our heavenly Father condemns, and thus encouraged others in the violation of the relative rights of our fellow men?

3. Nor, finally, can the Christian pulpit pronounce an unqualified eulogium, on what is called *personal valor*, or *bravery*, irrespectively of the cause in which it is displayed. Bravery is the ability to encounter personal danger without fear, to advance against a foe, undismayed by the roar of cannon, or the showers of bullets; to plunge your sword into the bosom of your fellow-man whom you have never before seen, and who has done you

* Matth. 5: 44.

† 7: 12.

no personal injury, regardless that others are aiming a deadly blow at you, and to persevere in the work of slaughter and death, unmoved by streams of human blood, by the lamentations of the wounded, or the dying groans of friends or foes. This is a natural attribute possessed by some men in common with many irrational animals. When we admire this characteristic in the latter, it is because we erroneously suppose it connected with some of the forethought belonging to man. When we regard it, as in truth we must, as the mere blind obedience of the animal to the instinctive, destructive propensities of its nature, our admiration ceases. And bravery in the ignorant, vicious and thoughtless of our race, possesses little more merit. Yet this is very generally its character in professed soldiers and military chieftains; it is based on a blind recklessness of consequences, temporal and eternal. Hence Buonaparte strove to banish all religion from his army and would not tolerate a single chaplain in it. It excites our admiration in man, because it implies the ability to divest ourselves of those habits of forethought, care and self-preservation, which are known to belong to every intelligent, cultivated mind; which are in themselves useful and laudable, and influence us on all other occasions. And it challenges our admiration in any individual, just in proportion as his habits of intelligent forethought are known to be extensive or strong on other occasions. Yet even in this view, bravery is merely intellectual, and may be employed in an unjust as well as a righteous cause. It is only when we behold a man of intelligent mind, of correct habits of forethought, accustomed to feel the claims of his family, friends and relatives upon his life and services, suppress the habits of his mind and the customary impulses of his nature, and for higher and nobler ends than life itself to him, encounter danger in resisting the inroads of the midnight assassin, in defending his family and fireside, and the undisputedly just territory of his country from the invasions of a foreign foe; it is only when we behold this self-control exercised in a

righteous cause, that we can justly admire its possessor, and award him our praise. Again we ask, have not some of us been wont to admire and applaud this disregard of death, when perhaps it originated from habitual ignorance, stupidity, or recklessness instead of intelligent self-control; and applauded it, perchance, when manifested in the cause of injustice or oppression? These are some of the supposed civil virtues which the word of God does not inculcate. Let us now pass on, and, in the second place, specify the positive instructions of the christian pulpit on our theme.

1. She inculcates *the recognition of God, as the Supreme Ruler of all nations, and the precedence of his claims over those of Caesar.*

It seems to be a dictate of reason, that he who is not only the Creator, but also the Governor of the Universe, and by whose delegated authority all lawful rulers on earth govern, should be recognized by them, and the precedence of his claims be conceded alike by rulers and people. This is accordingly demanded in explicit terms, by the word of God, and must be inculcated by the Christian pulpit. "The powers that be," says the great Apostle of the Gentiles, "are ordained of God;" not intending thereby, that God established any one particular form of government; but that it is his will that mankind shall be formed into civil polities and be governed by civil rulers, in short that *government is an ordinance of God.* But as God thus teaches us that human governors rule by his authority, it is obviously his will, that they should acknowledge their allegiance to him, and together with the people, professedly base their laws on his authority and will; and of course acknowledge the obligation and precedence of the latter.

Such recognition was on various occasions made by Washington, Franklin, Adams and others, among the principal founders of our republic. And although our national constitution happily prohibits the establishment of any particular religion by law, the framers of our government and the primitive Congress itself, virtu-

ally avowed *Christianity*, by observing the christian Sabbath, and providing for its observation on the part of others, by directing all the executive and judicial offices to be closed, by appointing a chaplain to officiate every Lord's day in the Congressional hall, and by employing the christian oath.

Another feature of such recognition is, that we should offer to God thanksgiving and pay our vows to the Most High. We are surrounded by blessings temporal and spiritual, such as fall to the lot of few, if any other nations on earth. And shall "the ox know his owner and the ass his master's crib," and shall our God have reason to say of us, "Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." No, my brethren, infidels and atheists, like those of France, who, during the reign of terror impiously decreed, There is no God, and Death is an eternal sleep, might consistently sink below the level of the ox, and feel exonerated from the gratitude which he expresses to his owner; but we who profess to believe not only in God, but also in Jesus Christ his Son, must regard the bounties of His providence with very different feelings. Most cordially should we enter into the spirit, and adopt the very appropriate language of the Executive recommendation, and "render thanksgiving to Almighty God for his goodness vouchsafed to us during the past year,—in continuing to us the blessings of civil and religious liberty, in preserving us from the ravages of malignant disease,—in loading us with the fruits of his bounty,—in furnishing so abundantly the means of individual, domestic and social improvement and enjoyment,—and in continuing among us the institutions and ordinances of our holy religion in all their purifying and elevating influence."

But whilst we are justly called on for gratitude on account of the numerous blessings of God, have we not equal reason to recognize God by humiliation before him on account of our numerous and grievous national sins? This also he has expressly required, and this the christian pulpit must urge upon the nations,

especially in times of national degeneracy, and when the judgments of God are abroad in the land. When the Lord appeared unto Solomon, after the dedication of the temple, he uttered these memorable words: "If I shut up the heavens that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; if my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."* Our rulers have therefore done well by appointing this day, and we as a professed people of God, are in the path of duty, when assembled for humiliation before him.

But our obligation to acknowledge God in our civil relations does not stop here. We are taught to regard this duty as absolute, we are informed by his word, and therefore the Christian pulpit is bound to teach, *that the laws of God must have precedence over those of man*; that if our earthly rulers command us to do, what our heavenly ruler has forbidden, "He that dwelleth in the heavens," is to be obeyed, rather than the worms of the dust that inhabit his footstool; in short, that we are to "obey God rather than man."† There seems to be a vague impression in some superficial minds, that whatever the rulers of a country enact as a law, must be right; or at least, if in obeying it we should be transgressing the laws of God, on our legislators and not on ourselves must the guilt rest. This opinion could not be maintained even in regard to the legislation of despotic governments, and on the supposition that kings ruled by divine right. For would it not still be absurd to suppose, that the great Ruler in heaven would invest his vicegerents on earth, with power to nullify and supercede the laws of his kingdom, by authorizing men to commit deeds which he had pronounced sinful, and subversive of the highest interests of humanity? But in a republican or representative government, the

* 2 Chron. 7: 14.

† Acts 5: 29. and 4: 19.

thing is still more absurd. Are not our lawgivers men like ourselves, chosen by us, and from the midst of us; and did we ever observe any more evidence of infallibility in them than in ourselves? And as they legislate under the constitution, which we have made for them; whence have or could they have the power, not pretended to be given to them in the constitution, to supersede or reverse the laws of God? In accordance with these views are the declaration and conduct of saints and inspired men of old. When the impious Nebuchadnezzar dedicated a golden image, probably of his father Nabopolassar, or of himself or of his chief god Bel, and commanded all his subjects to fall down and worship it, Daniel's associates, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to obey the impious law. When the wicked princes of Darius, the Medean, through jealousy of Daniel's influence at court, insidiously procured from the king a decree, that for thirty days no one should ask a petition of any god or man save of his majesty, Darius himself, on pain of being cast into the lions' den, the faithful servant of God, Daniel, disobeyed the command of his royal master, though he had lavished on him the highest honors of the kingdom. And to add but one example more, when the Jewish Congress or Sanhedrim commanded Peter and John not to speak at all, nor to teach any more in the name of Jesus, they not only magnanimously refused to obey, but appealed to the common sense of their rulers for the propriety of their refusal. Then "Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." * Oh no, my hearers, earthly rulers are "the ministers † or servants of God for good" and not evil; expressly appointed to be a terror to evil-doers and a praise to them that do well, to execute righteous judgment, and not to shed innocent blood. ‡ And as soon as they abandon their duty, and command what God has prohibited, they lose their claim to our obedience, and it becomes our

* Acts 4: 18, 19.

† Rom. 13: 4.

‡ Jerem. 22: 3.

duty to disregard their enactments. How heedless at least, if not wicked, and groundless is the assertion, that that is property which the law of man makes property, even if a human being were the article in question; as though the Creator had made no difference between persons and things, and as though our revolutionary fathers had uttered a fiction, when they affirmed it as a self-evident truth, that "All men are created equal, and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." How then can one of these immortal beings, possessed of such inalienable rights, and created by God for important purposes, which require him to have the control of his time and his powers, be rightfully converted by human law into a thing, and be made the property of another being like himself? - Before this can be the case, men must possess the power to supercede or annul the laws of God, which even the midwives of Egypt knew to be impossible. And God approved them because they feared him, and saved the men-children alive, whom the king of Egypt had commanded them to destroy. * Thus also, when the law of God commands "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master, the servant (and the legal condition of the Jewish servant was far better than that of the slave in America,) which is escaped from his master unto thee; he shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best: thou shalt not oppress him;" † who can doubt, that if human laws even directed us to arrest the trembling fugitive, it would be our duty to disobey?

Finally, the Christian pulpit is bound both by precept and example to inculcate the duty of acknowledging God in our political relations, *by praying for our rulers*, that God may grant them wisdom and fidelity so to govern, "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." ‡ This duty is obligatory on us at all times, and more particularly on such occa-

* Exod. 1: 17, 20. † Deut. 23: 15, 16. ‡ 1 Tim. 2: 1, 2.

sions at the present, specially set apart for this purpose, and at a time too, when our country is unhappily involved in war.

2. The second general duty which the Christian pulpit is called on to hold up to the view of our rulers and fellow-citizens in their political action, is *to recognize the universal brotherhood and equality of man in civil rights.*

Our revolutionary fathers uttered the truth of God, when they proclaimed before the world, as the justification of their rebellion against the oppressions of Great Britain, that "All men are created free and equal, and endowed with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." And how beautifully and nobly has the executive of our Commonwealth expanded the same idea, when he invites his fellow citizens to join in the supplication: "That the whole family of man, united in the bonds of fraternal affection, may go forward in the cultivation of every peaceful and useful art and science, in the advancement of civil liberty, and the universal diffusion of a pure and undefiled religion, correcting whatever is wrong in the condition of human society, to the achievement of that high and holy destiny contemplated in the purpose of infinite benevolence." Would to God that this philanthropic, this christian aspiration might find a cordial response in the hearts of all men, and especially in that of every American citizen, and still more especially of those of our rulers and citizens, who are now employed in spreading misery and death among the citizens of a neighboring republic.

It was this lesson of the universal brotherhood of man, which the benevolent Creator designed to teach all nations and all ages, when instead of creating myriads of different human beings as he did of vegetables in the different parts of the earth, he caused all nations to derive their existence from one pair, thus making them all of one bone and one flesh, and causing kindred blood to circulate through the veins of the whole human family. And it was the same doctrine, which the Apostle Paul taught the haughty

Athenians, when he told them, that the human race, instead of having derived its origin from the mere effects of matter and motion, as the Epicureans among them supposed, or of having existed in an eternal succession, as the disciples of Aristotle imagined, was all the work of one and the same hand; “that of one blood God made all nations to dwell on the face of the earth.” But the divine Saviour taught the duty of this fraternity in the most impressive and comprehensive manner, when, after having enjoined supreme love to God, he commanded, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself; * and again, All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.” *

This relation requires citizens to exercise *impartiality in selecting from the whole body of the community the best qualified men for office*, regardless of family influence, or party spirit, or bribes. The Scriptures not only in many places describe the character, which ought to belong to those who are entrusted with the powers of government, but expressly enjoin, that such only shall be chosen. Says Jethro to Moses, “*Thou shalt provide out of all the people, able men, such as fear God, men of truth hating covetousness, and place such over them to be rulers.*” † Moses himself commanded the people saying, “Take you *wise men* and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you.” ‡ And David says, “The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, he that ruleth over men must be *just, ruling in the fear of God.*” § These rules are indeed dictated by sound reason, and especially called for by the genius of our free institutions. The extensive violation of them must unavoidably sap the foundations of our government and eventually involve the loss of our liberties. Those officers, who are entrusted with the appointment of subordinates under them, are bound to exercise the same impartiality and fidelity in their selection. But, alas, how often do we witness

* Matth. 7: 12. 19: 19. † Exod. 18: 21. ‡ Deut. 1: 13. § 2 Samuel 23: 3.

the violation of these sacred principles and rules! How often are men elected to important posts of trust, who are destitute of any special qualification, merely from party spirit, because they were placed on the ticket of their party; and placed there, because they are active in exertions for the party! How many of the four hundred thousand offices of our country are filled with men, destitute of moral character; destitute alike of the talent and the inclination to "judge righteous judgment," and sometimes even by "men whose eyes are *blinded by a gift*;" whilst able and faithful men in abundance are found in the community, but are overlooked by the wire-workers of party, because they are too honest, too honorable, too high-minded to serve their gross purposes!

Again, the universal brotherhood of man requires, that *rulers should enact such laws as bear equally on the whole population*. All human legislation is at best but an approximation to equal justice; yet many of the grossest violations of this principle are intentional, and deserve severe reprehension. That such cases should exist in the despotic and regal and aristocratic governments of the old world is not remarkable, for there equality is not professed. But in our boasted republic, where all men are said to have been created equal, and entitled to certain inalienable rights, all unequal legislation is an inconsistency, and, when intentional, is justly condemned by every enlightened and impartial friend of our race. Of this character are the laws of different free States, which withhold from the colored man some of those equal rights which God has designed for him, and especially those laws in the District of Columbia and other slave States generally, by which he is stripped of personal liberty, is deprived of those inalienable rights, which by our own profession, and by the universal judgment of civilized man, belong to him as well as to ourselves. Such laws cannot but be offensive to the Great Parent of the universal brotherhood of man, of the privileges of which they are gross violations, as they also are of some of the precepts of the

decalogue and of the fundamental ethical principle of christianity, Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also so unto them. We know there are thousands of slave-holders whose slaves are treated with humanity and enjoy more physical comforts than a large portion of the free colored population in the North ; still the laws allow of much severity, and this the great majority of slaves experience. But the system is wrong in principle, and even with the most humane treatment, its victims are far from enjoying those opportunities and motives to improvement to which all human beings are entitled. The apology sometimes heard in defence of the system : That the negro is degraded and incapable of providing for himself is futile ; for that very degradation and incapacity so far as they exist, are the result of the oppression, in extenuation of which they are pleaded ; for the laws of those very States, prohibit under severe penalties, the negro from being taught to read or write. How much better would it have been, had slaveholders taken counsel of the Saviour himself, and as he commanded men "to search the scriptures" as the channels of their salvation, had they taught the poor negro to read, and thus aided him in obeying the Saviour's commands !

The spirit of universal brotherhood forbids all infringement on the rights, person, or territory of others, either by individuals or nations. The turpitude of individual violence and murder is conceded by all. Yet aggressive wars possess all the essential features of robbery and murder by the individual, whilst their enormity is aggravated by the stupendous scale of their execution. Wars like individual violence, robbery and murder arise from the evil passions of man. The same feelings, that prompted Cain to imbrue his fratricidal hands in the blood of Abel, actuated a Nimrod, an Alexander, a Cæsar, a Tamerlane, a Genghis Khan, and a Buonaparte ; and more or less influences every man at the present day, who is instrumental in declaring, conducting or vindicating aggressive wars. Whether the motive be thirst for military

glory in the abstract, or the hope of plunder, the moral character of the act is the same. Impelled by these sordid impulses, the aggressive soldier is willing to wade through the blood of his unoffending brother, or tread on his mangled corpse to attain their gratification, and to involve thousands of helpless mothers and little unoffending children in all the miseries of widowhood, poverty and starvation. O could such heartless soldiers hear the voice of these widows and orphans crying for just retribution to the God of heaven, their swords and muskets would fall harmless from their guilty hands! Yet the ear of Jehovah does hear their cries, and the final day of God will bring a fearful judgment. Amid the conflagration of Moscow and Badajos, were heard the shrieks of violated mothers and daughters; and war is most generally regarded as giving the soldiery a full license for the indulgence of all their sinful passions! The success of war is generally proportionate to the number of persons killed, and the very object of each party is to murder as many as possible of the other. And what awful success often attends these efforts! At Bautzen there fell twenty thousand; at Austerlitz, thirty thousand; at Eylau, fifty thousand; at Waterloo, (the great hero of which I recently in London in the House of Lords, heard deliver a speech still breathing the martial spirit of his earlier days,) seventy thousand; at Borodino, eighty thousand; at Fontenoy, one hundred thousand; and at Chalons, three hundred thousand; to say nothing of more ancient times, when in single battles twice that number of men were slaughtered. Look at the French butcheries in Spain and Portugal under Napoleon! Peaceful inhabitants were massacred without distinction or mercy. "Often were the ditches along the line of their march (says an eye-witness) literally filled with clotted, coagulated blood as with mire; the dead bodies of peasants, put to death like dogs, were lying there horribly mangled; little naked infants, of a year old or less, were found besmeared in the mud of the road, transfixed with bayonet wounds; matrons

and young women, dead with cruel, shameful wounds, and priests hanged on the trees by the wayside like felons." Well might the Apostle James exclaim, Whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence even of your lusts that war in your members? How unlike the meek, forgiving spirit of the Saviour! O how unlike the moral grandeur of the Millenium, when the devouring sword shall be converted into a ploughshare, the murderous spear into a pruning-hook, and men shall learn war no more! Nor will this glorious era be brought about by any miraculous influence from heaven, which like an omnipotent charm, is suddenly to transform the opinions and passions of men. On the contrary, like all the other prophecies of holy writ, the predictions of a universal peace, as the characteristic of the complete dominion of the Son of man on earth, will be effected by human instrumentality. Faithful and fearless disciples of Christ, will give utterance to these sentiments, and circulate them over the land, until they are received by the masses, and the action of government is thus controled by them. And can it be, that the Christian pulpit, the authorized interpreter of God's word, can innocently stand idle, and on this subject conceal the revealed instructions on the Prince of Peace? There are other remedies far better than war, for the evils intended to be corrected by its murderous influence: *negociation* between ministers or ambassadors of the parties themselves; *arbitration*, when the disputed point is referred to an umpire; *mediation*, when a third power offers its friendly offices; or a Congress of nations, to be governed by a code of international law, first agreed on among themselves. All these remedies have at different times been resorted to with success; and the last, which we regard as the best, will, we trust, ere long be established, to decide advisoirly on all cases voluntarily referred to it for adjudication, and war soon become as unpopular among christians as duelling now is.

3. The Christian pulpit is bound to *inculcate the obligation*

of the moral law of God, in all legislative, judicial and executive business of our public officers and all political action of private citizens.

Inasmuch as the principles of the moral law are based in the constitution of things and ultimately in the will and nature of God, they must of course be unchangeable, and obligatory on all men in all ages and under all circumstances; yea in the emphatic language of the Saviour, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." Since Church and State are separated by the New Testament and the theocracy is superceded, the precepts relating exclusively to the mode of worshipping God, are properly omitted from the civil code, and referred to the moral influence and suasion of the church. Yet all the overt violations of the precepts relating to the relative rights of men, are justly included in the legislative codes of all christian nations. But the moral principles pervading the decalogue, are also to be inculcated by the pulpit, as applicable to the performance of duties purely political.

Thus the *inviolability of an oath*, is to be inculcated just as much in regard to the official oath of *public officers*, as that which occurs in transactions between private citizens. It is amazing, and yet too true, that many public officers, who would be shocked at the idea of violating their oath in the ordinary transactions of life, treat their official oath with levity, and allow themselves to violate it on numerous occasions without compunction. Such conduct not only necessarily corrupts the purity of our civil institutions, but strikes a blow at their very foundation. It impairs the security of our relative rights, and if it becomes general, sooner or later must dissolve the bonds of society.

This principle requires all citizens honestly to obey the laws themselves, for conscience sake; and faithfully aid the magistrates in enforcing their obedience on others. Is it not strange that many, who desire to be regarded as good citizens, feel at lib-

erty to violate the law, if they can do it with impunity; will defraud the government out of its just dues, and yet would feel insulted if their honesty were called in question? Are there not many who allow themselves to utter falsehoods and practice frauds to promote a political end; yea some who adopt the infamous maxim, 'That every thing is fair in politics? But let it be remembered that morality is the same and as binding in public as in private life, and that all thieves and "liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." Nor can those citizens be justified, who are ever ready when a criminal has been sentenced to a just penalty, to let their womanish sympathies get the better of their judgments, and sign petitions for executive clemency. By the theory of our government the pardoning power was vested in the State and national Executives, to be exercised only in those cases, in which facts have come to light subsequently to the trial, proving the innocence of the convict; or for cases in which peculiar circumstances in the individual, render the penalty prescribed by law disproportionate to his guilt. In no other cases ought citizens to lend their names to such petitions; for if the penalty is just, it ought to be suffered, and if it is too severe, the law should be amended. Such frequent pardons greatly impair the influence of law, and multiply crime. As well might we at once imitate the example of the despotisms of the East, and vest absolute power in our rulers, making them also judge and jury, and thus save to the people the expenses of courts of justice.

Finally, this principle requires that governments should ever be true to their engagements, and execute faithfully the treaties and contracts into which they have entered. It was nobly said by a former king of France (John I.) "If truth were to be banished from the world, she ought still to find a home in the breasts of princes," and I add, still more in the hearts of republican rulers. Not only does perfidy in rulers tarnish the reputation of the nation in the eyes of the world, but it exerts a most baneful

influence on the morals of the community. When the thoughtless populace behold those, who enact the laws enjoining the obligation of contracts, themselves violate them with indifference, they feel exonerated from all obedience. *Punic* faith in the government, begets dishonesty in private individuals, and involves multitudes of the best citizens in ruin. Alas! that there should be so much ground for humiliation on this subject, both to our nation in her treatment of the poor Indians, and to our State in reference even to the suspicion of repudiation; for in fact she never intended to repudiate.

4. The last topic that the Christian pulpit is called to impress on civil rulers and the nation at large is, that *God*, the Supreme Ruler *exercises a righteous retribution over nations as such, in the present life.*

For man as an individual subject of moral government, God has appointed a state of retribution in the future world. But there are certain attributes belonging to government in its aggregate capacity, there are certain actions which are appropriate to governments alone and not to individuals, and certain principles of action both right and wrong, both righteous and wicked; and it seems to be the design of his providence with nations to vindicate the righteous principles of his moral law, to show to the world, that the eternal principles of truth and justice and morality are as essential to the prosperity of nations as of individuals, in short to demonstrate, that "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but that sin is a reproach to any people." This he effects as a general rule by bestowing peace, happiness and prosperity on nations, whilst their governments are administered with righteousness; and by permitting the iniquity and oppression of rulers, especially when sustained by the people, to work out its natural consequences in producing discontent, wretchedness, internal contentions and wars; and sometimes by bringing down the most signal judgments on the heads of wicked and oppressive nations by famine, pestilence

and foreign invasions! Thus says the distinguished Jewish law-giver, after he had beheld from Pisgah's top that land which he was not permitted to enter, and when he was soon to leave his people: "Keep therefore and do them (the statutes, which the Lord had given him,) for this is your wisdom and understanding in the sight of nations, which shall hear all these statutes and say, surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for."* Again; "And it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day, that all these curses shall come upon thee and overtake thee."† The prophet Jeremiah says, "Thus saith the Lord, ye have not hearkened unto me in proclaiming liberty every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbor: behold I proclaim liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the sword, to the pestilence and to the famine."‡ And finally, from a multitude of passages on this subject, abounding in the word of God, I will add but one more, the declaration of the Lord to Solomon: "*If my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*"§

A few practical *inferences* shall close this discourse.

1. From this subject we learn in the first place, that the Christian pulpit has an important work to perform in preserving and promoting the moral purity of our political institutions. Can it be doubted, that it is the duty of christian ministers, as authorized interpreters of God's word, to call the attention of the people on appropriate occasions, and in a suitable manner, to such institutions and laws of man, as violate the laws of God, and to urge

* Deut. 4: 6, 7. † Deut. 28: 15. ‡ Jer. 34: 17. § 2 Chron. 7: 14.

their abrogation? And is it not equally evident, that they are required to inculcate the necessity of moral integrity, of equity, impartiality and faithfulness in the administration of laws just in themselves? This duty is required, not only in order to ensure the blessing of God on our country, but also to promote piety among the people. Because, moral principle is a unit, and no nation that is politically corrupt, can be generally virtuous in the private relations of life. Hence, whenever those moral virtues or vices which are also applicable to political life, are discussed in the sacred desk, exemplifications should be drawn from both sources, and application be made alike to both. And as we habitually inculcate the duties of parents and children, of pastor and churches, so also should those of rulers and people not be forgotten. In short, a constant effort should be made to teach the people to feel their responsibility to God for their political action, and for the character of the men whom they elevate to office; and to inculcate the paramount obligation of conforming all human legislation to the ethical principles of God's word, whilst at the same time nothing relating to party politics should ever be introduced into the pulpit.

It cannot be denied that so called christian governments are less influenced by the principles of christianity than individuals. Indeed it may be disputed, whether there is a christian government on earth; although there are nations of professed christians. The principles of international law, especially in regard to war, are less purified by the spirit of Christianity than those touching the relative rights of individuals, and men are far better christians in the private walks of life, than in their public political conduct. Nations, as such, are less christian, than the individuals composing them. We see no sufficient reason why this should be so, if the pulpit would habitually and earnestly pray for our country and her rulers, and would fearlessly speak out and proclaim alike to rulers and private citizens the political duties enjoined in God's

word, as well as those of a social and individual nature. Indeed so long and so extensively has this duty been neglected, that in many places the people are unwilling to have it discharged at all, and some christian ministers themselves scarcely have clear perceptions of the exact lines of their duty; of the subjects on which they ought, and those on which they ought not to preach; of the difference in short between party politics, which has nothing to do in the pulpit, and the *morals* of politics, which are copiously taught in Scripture, and cannot rightfully be excluded from the sacred desk. Certainly, if the people are rightly instructed on the sinfulness of war, on the widespread moral desolations and incalculable human sufferings attending it, and on the utter impossibility of the extension of Christianity over the earth whilst the spirit of aggressive war prevails, they would not justify the invasion of foreign lands by our armies, nor allow their legislators to vote supplies for a war of aggression.

The individuals who declare war seldom participate in its dangers and sufferings, but where wars have prevailed the mass of the community, even in pagan nations, dread them as the greatest scourge of humanity. And there is little reason to doubt, that if Constantine the great, the first christian ruler who had it in his power to exemplify the principles of christian national government, had been a truly enlightened and spiritual christian, and after his professed conversion, had beaten his sword into a ploughshare, and abstained from all offensive war; and if christian rulers after him had learned war no more; Christianity would long ago have been embraced by the heathen world; for no other argument can be found, which would more powerfully have recommended it as the religion of the Prince of Peace, than the fact that by its adoption they would be delivered from all the horrors of war. But alas! the full development of the Saviour's principles on this subject, seem to be reserved for the latter day glory of his kingdom!

2. It is evident that christians generally, and the community at large, have also an important part assigned them, in promoting and preserving the purity of our political institutions. This is supereminently the case in all representative governments. There the people select their own rulers, and thus virtually themselves make and execute the laws of the land, through their representatives. It is therefore the duty of all parties to nominate men of unblemished moral character for all offices. It is utterly unimportant with what religious denomination they are connected, because under our happy constitution all denominations enjoy equal rights; and our legislatures have no power to enact laws giving preference to any religious sect; but all our officers should be men fearing God and loving justice. They should not be time-servers nor office-hunters, nor drunkards, nor men whose influence can be bought, either with money, or the promise of preferment. They should possess the requisite knowledge and be men of honor, enjoying the confidence of the community. In the selection of county and borough executive officers, men of the highest moral and intellectual qualifications should be chosen regardless of party; and for the higher executive officers and the State or national legislatures, if immoral or unworthy men are nominated by the party whose political opinions we prefer, christians ought not indeed to vote for candidates of the opposite party, who would enact laws which they regard as injurious to the country; but they ought not to vote at all for those offices, or cast an independent ticket of their own choice, and at ensuing elections should see, that better men of their own political principles, are nominated for their suffrage. Yet christians, and even christian ministers, ought not to neglect the exercise of their privilege at the polls, for if the virtuous stay away, of course the unprincipled rabble will decide the elections, and choose men of their own stamp.

Another part of the work devolved by Providence on christians and the community at large, is to labor for the correction of all

immoral, unequal and oppressive laws. If laws are enacted inconsistent with the public faith, or with the laws of God, or the universal brotherhood of man, either by our State or National Legislatures, they should be repealed. As a patriot and a christian, I feel bound to bear my testimony against the unjust laws relating to our despised and often oppressed colored population. In our own and other free States they are denied the elective franchise, although they are required to contribute their full share of taxes ; and in the Slave States, some of the laws on this subject are direct violations of the laws of God, and christians there and elsewhere should exert their utmost influence to have the entire system brought to a speedy close, by the peaceful and voluntary action of the slave States themselves. Until we have used our utmost efforts to purify our own statute book, and to have slavery abolished in the District of Columbia, which is under the exclusive control of our Congress, as well as to prevent the influence of our Federal Government from being any longer abused to favor this unjust system, we must stand guilty at the bar of heaven of participation in this sin.

Nor can I as a minister of Christ, bound to declare the whole counsel of God, refrain on this occasion from bearing my decided testimony against offensive war in general, and that in which we are now engaged with Mexico in particular. Offensive war is a remnant of barbarism, and is no more rational or christian, as a resort for deciding national disputes, than duels are to adjust the differences of individuals. With the question, which of the two parties was the most active during the last ten years, in aiding to bring about that train of events the revolt of Texas, the acknowledgement of her independence, and finally her annexation, out of which this war principally grew, I have nothing to do. Nor is it necessary to inquire, whether this war is justifiable according to the maxims of an ungodly world. It is enough for me, that at the tribunal of true Christianity, I believe, it cannot be vindicated.

Had Mexico invaded our country, I should have been among the first to justify her repulsion. But we are at least now the actual invaders. Our armies have gone not only into the disputed territory, but far beyond it; and are spreading misery and death among the Mexican population. The war is literally offensive, aggressive and not defensive, and on the principles of our holy religion, I think there can be no question of its injustice; for all aggressive wars are sinful. And the armies themselves the more obviously participate in the guilt, as they consist entirely of regulars and volunteers, as they necessarily must. For the fathers of our republic, regarding all wars of conquest as utterly uncongenial with the spirit of our republic, so framed the Constitution as to confine the powers of Congress in calling our citizens to military service to three cases, "to execute the laws of the union," "to suppress insurrection," and "to repel invasions;" and no power either of Congress or of the President, can compel any citizen to cross our country's line, to invade any nation. Alas that the wisdom of the fathers, should so soon be forgotten by their sons! It is true, Mexico owes us the balance of a debt. If she is unable to pay punctually, she ought, especially in her unsettled condition, be indulged, as Pennsylvania and other delinquent States of our country have been. If, after she is able to pay, she should refuse to do so, recourse should be had to negotiation, and if that fails, all commercial intercourse with her should be cut off, or a double duty be levied on all articles imported from that country, till her debt is discharged. Forbearance, peaceable means of redress, and, if all fail, forgiveness for any thing short of actual violence or invasion, are as much virtues of nations as of individuals. Let us therefore labor to stay the ravages of the sword. Let us use our influence among our fellow-citizens, and at the throne of our universal Father, for the return of our armies to their homes. For if this war is unjust in its inception, its continuance cannot be more righteous, and the sooner it is ended the better. If the people

generally let their voice be heard against it, Congress, which will soon convene, can put an end to it, by providing for negotiation, and demonstrating the wisdom of our fathers, who refused to place the sword and the purse into the same hands. And if we do not, if we continue to applaud the exploits of our army in such a cause; we encourage our rulers and are justly held individually responsible before the judge of all the earth. And as assuredly as there is a righteous God in heaven, if our citizens continue to foster the spirit of conquest, so extensively and unblushingly avowed by many of our newspapers and leading politicians, and our government goes forward with her aggressions on foreign lands, the days of our true national glory will ere long be numbered. The cause of religion will languish, the people will become corrupt, the sabbath will be desecrated, the Spirit of God will withdraw from us, and moral desolation will flow as a torrent over the land. We may for a while retain the name of a republic, and our territory may be greatly enlarged; but our free and just institutions, which were the admiration of the world, will be gone, and sooner or later our liberties will be buried beneath the overwhelming flood of national corruption.

ERRATA.—Through an oversight, in a few copies, the word Oct. was printed instead of Nov. on the title page, and on the third page *ἐκστῆν* instead of *ἐκστῆναι*.